

With the Name of Allah, All-Merciful, Most Merciful

The following is a translation of a brief chapter from the Collected Rulings of Imam Ibn Taymiyyah, Vol. 11 - Tasawwuf (Sufism), pp. 94-99.

It contains an excellent discussion of the alleged hadith qudsi, "Were it not for you (O Muhammad), I would not have created the universe(s)" (popularly: "*Law laka, law laka, lama khalaqtu l-aflaka*".) Imam Ibn Taymiyyah's commentary on the meaning of this statement strikes a great balance, and Allah knows better, between the excesses of some of the "Sufis" in over-praising the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and the dry reluctance of some "Salafis" in praising him, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, even though we should love him more than our wives or husbands, children, even ourselves. It thus outlines the ideal understanding of a true "Sufi" or a true "Salafi".

This commentary is similar to Mulla 'Ali al-Qari's justification of the meaning of another alleged hadith qudsi, "I was a hidden treasure, and wished to be known, so I created Man", from the ayah, "I have only created the Jinn and Mankind that they may worship me", since this worship and service is perfected in the person of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Shah Waliullah of Delhi also gives a nice illustration of what is meant by "Were it not for you ..." through the analogy of a king who desires pure olive oil, and thus commands his courtiers to seek out successively the best land in his kingdom, the best farmers, the best olives from the resulting crop etc., in his mystical treatise, *Sata'at*, which is a commentary on "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth ..."

Of course, all references to ayat in English imply an attempted translation of the meanings.

Phrases in square brackets [...] are my explanatory comments. I am extremely grateful to my father for his invaluable help with some of the difficult parts of this text, and to Gibril Fouad Haddad for correcting the translation of the "kneaded clay" hadith.

All Praise is due to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

Usama ibn Suhaib Hasan.

Safar 1417 / July 1996.

Ibn Taymiyyah says:

The Prophet, may Allah Exalted bless him and grant him peace, was created from the same substance from which all mankind is created, and none of mankind was created from Light (*nur*); rather, it is established as authentic (*sahih*) that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said,

"Truly, Allah created the angels from Light; He created Satan from Fire free of smoke; and He created Adam from what has been described to you."

However, the excellence of some of creation over others is not through consideration of what they were created from alone. For example, a believer may be created from a disbeliever, and a disbeliever from a believer, such as Ibrahim from Azar or the son of Nuh from Nuh. Adam was created by Allah from clay, but when He shaped him, and blew into him of His Spirit, and made the angels prostrate to him, and preferred him over them by teaching him the Names of all things, and by virtue of His creating him with His Two Hands, and so on, then Adam and the righteous of his offspring became better than the angels, even though the former are created from clay, and the latter from light.

This is a major issue which is discussed at length elsewhere, for the excellence of the children of Adam is due to many factors, explanation of which would be too lengthy here. Their excellence only becomes manifest when they enter the Eternal Abode,

*"and the Angels enter upon them from every door, (saying:)
Peace be upon you because of your having Patience!
What an excellent final abode!"* [Thunder]

The human is created from a drop of sperm (*nutfah*), then from a lump of chewed flesh (*mudghah*), then from that which clings (*'alaqah*), then he moves from childhood to old-age, then from one abode to another [i.e. from this world to the next]; so his excellence does not become apparent during his initial states, but only at the completion of his states, unlike the angel, whose initial and final states are similar.

Those who hold that the Angels are better than the Prophets err here, for they look at the states of the Prophets while they are in the midst of their [changing] states, before they reach the end-stages of perfection promised for them in the abode of the Hereafter.

The excellence of our Prophet over the Angels was manifested on the Night of Ascension, when he reached a level where he could hear the scraping of the Pens, and was higher than the stations of the Angels. Allah Exalted manifests some of His Majestic Power and Amazing Wisdom through righteous humans, saints and prophets, which He does not manifest through the angels, for He combines in them [the righteous humans] qualities which are scattered amongst other creation. Thus He creates the man's body from the Earth and his spirit from the Highest Company, and this is why it is said, *"Man is a lesser universe, and a copy (microcosm) of the greater Universe."*

Muhammad is the Chief of the Children of Adam, the Best of Creation, the most noble of them in the sight of Allah. This is why some have said that "*Allah created the Universe due to him*", or that "*Were it not for him, He would have neither created a Throne, nor a Footstool, nor a heaven, earth, sun or moon*". However, this is not a tradition (hadith) on the authority of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, neither authentic nor weak, nor has any of the People of Knowledge of Hadith related it from the Prophet, may Allah Exalted bless him and grant him peace; in fact, it is not even known on the authority of the Companions; it is actually an anonymous statement. However, it may be explained from a correct aspect, such as the saying of Allah,

*"He has made subjected for you
whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth" [The Kneeling],*

or His saying,

*"He has made subjected for you the ship,
so that it may sail in the ocean by His command;
He has made the rivers subjected for you;
He has made subjected for you the sun and the moon, diligently pursuing
their courses;
and He has made subjected for you the night and the day.
He has given you of every thing that you have asked Him;
Were you to count the favours of Allah, you would never number them up"
[Abraham],*

and similar signs (ayat) in which He explains that He has created the creation for the Children of Adam, although it is known that Allah has similar and greater Wisdoms other than this in His creation, but He explains for the Children of Adam what benefit there is for them in it, and how He has abundantly showered His favour upon them.

For if it is said, "*He did such-and-such for such-and-such reason*", this does not necessarily rule out another reason behind it; similarly if someone says, "*Were it not for so-and-so He would not have created such-and-such*", this does not necessarily rule out other great wisdoms in such creation. However, since the best of the righteous of the children of Adam is Muhammad, creating him was a desirable end of deep-seated purposeful wisdom, more than for anyone else, and hence the completion of creation and the fulfilment of perfection was attained with Muhammad, may Allah Exalted bless him and grant him peace.

Allah created the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them in six days, the last of the creation being on the Day of Congregation (*Jumu'ah*), when Adam was created, being the last of creation, created after the late afternoon ('*Asr*) on the Day of Congregation. The Chief of the Children of Adam is Muhammad, may Allah Exalted bless him and grant him peace, Adam and his children being under his banner. He, may Allah Exalted bless him and grant him peace, said,

"Truly, I was written as the Seal of the Prophets with Allah, while Adam was kneaded in his clay",

i.e. that my prophethood was decreed and manifested when Adam was created but before the breathing of the Spirit into him, just as Allah decrees the livelihood, lifespan, deeds and [eventual] misery or happiness of the slave when He creates the embryo but before the breathing of the Spirit into it. Since Man is the seal and last of all creation, and its microcosm, and since the best of Man is thus the best of all creation absolutely, then Muhammad, being (to creation like) the Pupil of the Eye, the Axis of the Mill and the Distributor [of qualities, blessings] to the Collective (or the Axis of the diverse types in the collective), is as it were the Ultimate Purpose from amongst all the purposes of creation. Thus it cannot be denied to say that "*Due to him all of this was created*", or that "*Were it not for him, all this would not have been created*", so if statements like this are thus explained according to what the Book and the Sunnah indicate, it is acceptable.

As for those [explanations] which go to extremes along the lines of the extremes of the Christians in associating creation with some of the attributes of Lordship (Rububiyyah), they are to be rejected completely, for it is established as authentic from him, may Allah Exalted bless him and grant him peace, that he said,

"Do not exaggerate in praising me the way the Christians praised Jesus son of Mary, for I am only a slave, so say: the Slave of Allah, and His Messenger";

and Allah Exalted has said,

*"O People of the Book! Do not go to extremes in your religion,
Nor say anything regarding Allah except the Truth!
Truly the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, is a Messenger of Allah,
and His Word which He bestowed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him;
so have faith in Allah and His Messengers, and say not: Three!
Desist, this would be better for you!
Truly Allah is only One Deity." [Women]*

Allah has declared His Rights, in which no created thing can share. Thus worship is not appropriate except if it be of Him; nor prayer unless to Him; nor reliance unless upon Him; nor yearning unless for Him; nor terror unless of Him; nor shelter nor safety unless with Him; none brings good except He, and none removes evil except He, and there is neither movement nor power, except by Him!

*"Nor does intercession with Him benefit,
except for the one whom He gives permission" [Sheba];*

"Who is there to intercede with Him, unless by His Permission ?" [Ayat al-Kursi];

*"Every one in the heavens and the earth comes to the Merciful as a slave;
He knows them, and has counted them out fully;
Every one of them will come to Him on the Day of Resurrection, alone."
[Mary]*

Allah Exalted has also said,

*"Those who obey Allah, and His Messenger,
and fear Allah, and are dutiful to Him,
they are the Successful." [Light]*

Thus He has enjoined obedience as being to Allah and to the Messenger, but fear and pious duty as being for Allah alone, as in His saying,

*"If only they would be contented with what Allah and His Messenger have
given them,
and would say: Enough for us is Allah!
Allah will give us of His Bounty, and so will His Messenger,
Truly we are yearning for Allah" [Repentance],*

so giving is from Allah and His Messenger, but reliance is upon Allah alone, and yearning is for Allah alone!

---(end of chapter)